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AUTHOR Limbrick, Libby; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Based on the principle that children learn a great deal from other children, this booklet suggests ways to use the potential of the peer group to help other pupils become better readers. The first section, "Children as Natural Teachers," presents the advantages of using peer tutoring, the eight important components of a successful peer tutoring program, and the design of such a program. The next section describes "Paired Reading" (a technique pioneered in Britain): the technique, who can tutor whom, how much training tutors should have, how peer tutoring can be fit into the day, what reading materials can be used, and how to determine the instructional level. The third section discusses "The Mangere Technique": its techniques, how much training tutors should have, and what reading materials can be used. The booklet also notes points to watch out for in both programs, gives brief examples from four schools that use peer tutoring, and includes a tutor's handbook for paired reading as well as a report card and a tutor's checklist. (SR)

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PEER POWER

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Peer Power

Using peer-tutoring to help low-progress readers in primary and secondary schools.

By Libby Limbrick and
Stuart McNaughton

Education Department
University of Auckland

and
Marie Cameron
Educational Psychologist

New Zealand Council
for Educational Research
Wellington 1985

Children as Natural Teachers

Children learn a great deal from other children. The power of this learning from peers is easily seen. Children learn such things as playground games, the language of their friends, and social behaviour, remarkably quickly — and effectively. The significance of this learning has long been recognised by schools and some, particularly small country schools, use older students to help younger ones, though usually in an informal manner. This booklet suggests ways to use the potential of the peer group to help other pupils to become better readers.

The methods of *peer tutoring* we suggest mean that pupils must be systematically trained to be tutors. Research has shown that pupils need specific training if they are to be effective reading tutors. With training, their potential is channelled effectively. Just as important, with training and the appropriate methods, the tutors too can benefit. Pupils who are low-achieving-readers can be tutors of those below them and *become better readers in the process.* The suggestions and points made in this booklet are based on research and school programmes which we have been carrying out since 1978.

The Advantages of Using Peer Tutoring

A reading programme

1. Instruction can be individualised.
2. Improvements in oral reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension follow.
3. Tutors improve in confidence and self-esteem.
4. A co-operative non-competitive relationship between students is fostered.
5. Measurable progress accrues for both the tutor and the one being helped.
6. Classroom organisation and time can be better planned.

The eight important components of a successful peer tutoring programme

We have found that several types of programmes all have worked successfully in schools. Two of these are described in the next section. Although the techniques in these programmes vary they have some elements in common.

1. Both tutor and the learner should be actively engaged in *reading books* (e.g., books or passages out of books, not filling in work sheets).
2. Reading material should be *suitable;*
   of interest to the reader;
   at the right difficulty level, no more than 4 mistakes in 50 words.
3. The sessions should be *short.*
   10-15 minutes is enough.
4. The sessions should be *frequent.*
   Preferably daily, not less than 3-4 times a week.
5. The tutors should be *trained.*
   Use of a manual, such as this one, is recommended.
6. The programme should be *short term.*
   Four to six weeks is enough, otherwise interest can wane and benefits do diminish.
7. The programme should be *monitored* and *evaluated.*
   Checking book levels, providing support and encouragement is essential. We also suggest the use of Running Records (which incorporate miscue analysis) to evaluate students' progress. Sources of suitable prose inventories for miscue analysis are *Informal Prose Inventory* by Holdaway and *LARIC Unit 8,* New Zealand Department of Education.
8. Recognise tutors' *effort.*
   Show that you have appreciated their help; some schools use awards, letters, or public recognition.

Designing a peer-tutoring programme

We will describe two programmes we have had experience with. Both had the eight basic components just mentioned. Think of the needs of your children and your school when you choose a programme, it may not be exactly the same as either of these. Programme 1 is simple to establish, and can result in most worthwhile benefits for both tutors and the tutored. Programme 2 requires greater skills and therefore more training for the tutors. It is more suited for secondary schools.

Programme One:
Paired Reading

A technique pioneered with parents in Britain by Morgan and Lyon.

Paired reading starts from a simple technique of reading together. It provides increased opportunity for both tutor and learner to engage in reading in a mutually enjoyable way. Reading competence develops for the learner through extra time being spent in reading at a level of difficulty not possible without the support of a more competent peer. But total dependence on the tutor is avoided by providing opportunities and encouragement for the learner to read independently and by the tutor delaying the correction of errors to allow self-correction attempts.

Reading competence develops for the tutor too, through paying close attention to the text both during reading together and when monitoring the learner's reading.

Technique

1. The learner selects a book from a box of suitable books with the help of the tutor.
2. Learner and tutor settle themselves at the table. The tutor should be friendly and interested in his/her pupil.
3. The tutor introduces the book to the learner by discussing the title, cover, pictures and author's name. If a story from the previous day is to be continued, discussion should centre on recall and predictions about the passage about to be read.
4. The tutor then instructs the learner to read aloud with him/her but says that if the learner wishes to read alone he/she should knock on the table twice. (This is demonstrated.) The tutor tells the learner that if an error is made the tutor will help, after which they will read together again until the learner knocks on the table again.
5. The learner and tutor read aloud together until the learner knocks on the table indicating he/she wishes to read independently.

6. The learner reads aloud independently until an error is made. After telling the learner the correct answer the two read together again. . . and so on for ten minutes.
7. The tutor does not intervene for 5 seconds if the learner hesitates. If an error is made the tutor waits until the end of the sentence before giving help. Self corrections (corrections by the learner) and repetitions should not be counted as errors. That is, the learner should not be corrected by the tutor.
8. The tutor praises the learner's attempts at independent reading, self correcting and successful solving of difficult words. The praise should be in natural, ordinary language, e.g., That's great! Hey that's good! Ace! Nice one!
9. At the end of ten minutes the tutor discusses the book or passage with the learner, looking ahead and talking about their reactions to the story.
10. Finally, the learner returns the book to the box while the tutor fills in the report card which records the tutor's opinion of the learner's reading and reaction to the tutoring session. A useful report card you may copy is on page 21.

Who can tutor, and with whom?

As the procedures are simple and easily taught almost anyone can tutor effectively using the paired-reading technique. We have seen 6 and 7 year old tutors working very effectively. The tutors can be low-progress readers too. What is required is that they be sufficiently advanced in their skills (2 to 3 years in reading age) above the student being tutored. Within a school, factors like the age difference between tutors and tutees, and differences in the sex or race of the pairs, appear to be unimportant. What is important is that the children enjoy working together.

How much training should tutors have?

There should be two training sessions of about 15 minutes each.
Session 1 — Tutors only, several at once, if you wish.

- Describe the programme telling the tutors they have been chosen to help and be a special friend for a younger child.
- Give each tutor a handbook (an example you may copy starts on page 18.)

- Outline the procedures in the handbook.
- Role-play tutoring with teacher as tutor and tutors as learners, modelling self correction, errors and hesitations.
- Get tutors to alternately role-play tutor and learner. Provide feedback and help when needed.
- Discuss the completion of report cards.

Session 2 — Learners and Tutors.

- Match tutor/learner pairs. Maximise reading age difference.
- Talk over the tutoring procedures. Get the tutors to contribute.
- Let learners and tutors practice, with feedback and praise from teacher where appropriate.
- Co-operatively put together a checklist for tutors to use at each session.

How can you fit peer tutoring into the day?

Where there is only one child making slow progress (and withdrawal from class is likely to be disruptive) tutoring can be scheduled before school in the morning or during lunch. Even two or three tutoring pairs can be managed this way. When a whole class is divided up into tutoring pairs they can be successfully timetabled into the 15 minutes before lunch, after play or after lunch breaks. Tutoring needs to be regular, for example, three times a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday). Allow 15 minutes for each tutoring session; ten minutes for reading and five minutes for settling down, discussion and report card completion. Do not make tutoring compete with other highly desirable activities (e.g. sports, special visits etc.).

What reading materials can be used?

Provide a wide variety of books from either the school library, School Library Service or graded readers not in regular use. Make sure they are at about, or just above, the 'instructional level' of the learners. Some schools have 'boxed books' at different reading levels which provide a valuable and convenient resource. Remember that as children progress, the difficulty level of the material will have to be reviewed.

How to determine the 'instructional' level

A simple rule of thumb for judging the appropriate level of difficulty is to select a passage from the book before the reading session; count off 50 words, and as the child reads make a mark on a piece of paper for every error that is not self corrected. If there are fewer than four errors, the book is too easy. If there are more than ten errors the book is too hard.

Programme Two:
The Mangere Technique

These techniques were first developed for use with parents as tutors for their own children. *Parents as Remedial Reading Tutors*, by Stuart McNaughton, Ted Glynn and Viviane Robinson, NZCER, 1979 explains these techniques in depth and may be used as a reference. The Mangere technique is described in a pamphlet for parents, *Remedial Reading at Home*, available from ACER and NZCER, and reprinted in *Best of* set: *Reading*.

The same procedures can be used in peer tutoring by intermediate and secondary school students. However the techniques require somewhat more complex skills than simple paired-reading and the training is therefore more exacting.

Techniques

1. Following training, tutor and learner meet regularly in a quiet, peaceful place. The learner brings a range of books in his/her own 'book box', again at, or slightly above, 'instructional level'. The teacher must keep updating this material. The tutor needs to be taught how to select appropriate books for his/her learner (refer back to the last section of Programme One).
2. The tutor records the date and the title of the book in a diary. This is helpful as it enables the teacher to keep tabs on what is being read.
3. The tutor helps the learner select a book (it helps if tutor has pre-read the books).
4. Brief discussion about book — what happened before, what may occur, etc. — helps to orient the learner to story.
5. The learner begins reading aloud.
6. The tutor praises sentences and passages read correctly, self-corrections, and corrections which the learner makes following tutor help.
7. The tutor remembers to PAUSE for 5 seconds before giving help.

8. When the learner needs help, the tutor follows the following steps:

(a) When the learner makes a mistake that doesn't make sense:
— ask a question or two about the meaning of the story
— tell the child the word if the prompt is unsuccessful.

Example

Book: The car raced along the road
Learner: *The car raced along the red*
Tutor: *Well that word looks a bit like red. Where does a car usually go?*
Learner: *Along a road.*
Tutor: *Great: let's try that again.*

(b) When the learner makes a mistake that doesn't change the meaning of the story:
— if minor, ignore
— otherwise, stop, and provide help
— ask pupil to look carefully at the word
— how does it begin? Is it like any other words the child knows?
— tell the word after two attempts.

Example

Book: The children jumped into the car.
Learner: *The children got into the car.*
Tutor: *That makes sense. Good. They did get into the car but the word isn't got. Have a good look at it.* (Points at jumped.)
Learner: *Jump. Jumped.*
Tutor: *That's right, good.*

(c) When the learner comes to a word he/she doesn't know and says nothing:
— wait for 5 seconds
— suggest that the learner goes back to the beginning of the sentence
to 'Try that again' or reads on to end of sentence
— ask him/her to try a word that makes sense and begins the same way as the problem word
— tell the child the word if he/she still does not identify it.

Example

Book:	At the circus there were lions, horses and clowns.
Learner:	*At the. . .* (5 seconds wait)
Tutor:	*Try reading on to the end.*
Learner:	*. . . were lions, horses and clowns.*
Tutor:	*So what's this word? Where do you find lions, horses and clowns?*
Learner:	*At the circus?*
Tutor:	*Right! Now read the sentence again.*

9. When the learner has read for 10 to 15 minutes, finish at an appropriate place, and briefly discuss the story.
   The tutor asks the learner to talk about what he or she has read. This might include talking about the characters, the events (happenings, sequence and consequences), the setting and main ideas of passage.

10. The tutor writes one or two comments about the tutoring session in the diary (e.g., 'Paul found this book too easy' or 'Gets stuck if there are no pictures'.)

How much training should tutors have?

Tutors need 2 or 3 training sessions before they begin formal tutoring. We have found that tape-recorded training sessions are helpful. These help tutors attend to errors, and discuss tutoring techniques. (They are available from the authors.) A video of the process is also helpful. Follow up tape sessions with 1 to 1 practise with a learner, with the programme organiser helping the budding tutor.

Regular monitoring of tutoring techniques throughout the programme is essential. This can be done by discreet or friendly 'looking on' or by tape recording tutoring sessions. Providing feedback on tutoring techniques to individual tutors is the aim.

What reading materials can be used?

As in the paired-reading programme, provide a wide variety of books that are not in regular use. They must be at, or just above, the instructional level of the learners. Try using high impact readers, particularly paperbacks that have a different format from the usual remedial readers.

For example: Crown Street Kings — Macmillan Educational.
Rockets — Macmillan Educational (high school).
Nelson Getaways — T. Nelson & Sons (high school).
Trend — Reed Educational.
Lively Readers — T. Nelson & Sons.
Checkers — Evans.

The books, magazines, readers, etc., should be grouped according to their level of difficulty so that the tutor will find them easy to select. Set aside a box of books especially for the tutoring programme with the level of difficulty indicated inside the cover of each book. Use a code instead of a reading age, e.g., *Levels 20-30.*

How to determine instructional level

Refer to the 'rule of thumb' under Programme One, page 10.

Points To Watch Out For In Both Programmes

1. Make sure that you keep a check that the books being used are at the correct instructional level. Make sure that tutors change levels as the learners make progress.
2. Provide feedback to tutors including how well the learners are doing.
3. After four to six weeks re-test the learners.
   If little or no progress has been made in book levels or Reading Ages then check
   (a) books used
   (b) tutor skills
4. A useful check is to ask the tutor to tape-record a reading session so that you can later evaluate how effective the sessions are.
5. Attempt to increase the relationship between what happens in the regular class lessons with the special tutoring. All good tutoring programmes have 'spin-offs'.

Peer Tutoring In Action

'Peer tutoring? Good idea but too difficult to organise in a busy school.' You may have heard such comments. Peer tutoring is in fact not difficult to organise and is already part of the regular reading programmes in some schools. Here are examples of how this has been achieved.

School 1

Peer tutoring using the paired-reading technique is part of the daily reading programme. This class has two main levels for reading. In each level the top 25% in reading are paired with children in the lowest 25%. Boxed books at a range of reading levels ensure a wide variety of reading material at an appropriate level. Regular running records monitor the children's progress.

School 2

Peer tutoring supplements the daily reading programmes. For many children this is the only reading they do outside class time. For a six week block in each term a Standard 4 (Year 5) class is paired with a Standard 1 (Year 2) class. Paired-reading using books from the school library takes place for 15 minutes before lunch on three days a week. Half of each class changes rooms, with the class teachers supervising in their own classrooms.

Improved attitudes to reading have been observed and informal assessment suggested marked progress in reading competence. In the playground substantially more social interaction between the two classes is evident.

School 3

Small groups of children in a J2 (Year 1) and a J2/3 (Year 1/2) class were identified as making slow progress in reading. They are now tutored by Standard 3 (Year 4) and Standard 4 (Year 5) children during 15 minutes of their lunch break, three times a week, for six weeks. Only one six-week tutoring block is held each term.

School 4

Volunteer 6th and 7th Form (Year 11 and 12) students tutor 3rd and 4th

Form (Year 8 and 9) students who are experiencing reading difficulties. Tutors often act as mediators in personal matters, troubles with teachers, and subject related problems as well as in reading. Training sessions for tutors are held in the first week of the year and in the last weeks for students who want to tutor the following year. Tutoring involvement is recognised by the school through awarding Service Awards.

What students say about peer tutoring

My best friend is my reading tutor.

Learner, boy, aged 7.

I really look forward to reading (tutoring) *time. B. is getting much better.*

Tutor, boy, aged 10.

Hey William. Look I was wrong there! You asleep or something.

Learner, boy, aged 7.

I really miss reading with Wendy when she's sick.

Tutor, girl, aged 10.

The best thing about it (the tutoring), *was picking books together, reading with them and knowing you can do it.*

Tutor, girl, aged 13.

I felt a great feeling of achievement when Kirsten and I first began the reading programme, she was very shy — as the days went by I could see her improving.

Tutor, girl, aged 16.

I feel if Ed gained something from the tutoring — like an enjoyment of reading maybe — then I achieved something too. I feel closer to those younger boys — even just understand them more . . . I've achieved a sense of responsibility.

Tutor, aged 17.

Tutor's Handbook for Paired Reading

You have been chosen to be a teacher of a younger person in the school because your teachers think that you can help your pupil to become a better reader and to enjoy reading books alone.

When your teacher tells you the name of your pupil you can fill in the blank spaces.

Your pupil's name is _____

Remember to always be friendly and encouraging to give _____ lots of praise when _____ tries hard and reads well.

If you are pleased with _____ when _____ tries hard it will make _____ feel happy about reading with you.

The following steps will help to remind you of the way to take your reading lessons. If you have any problems, ask your teacher to help you.

Step 1

Collect _____ from classroom.

Go to your workroom.

Talk quietly to _____ in a friendly way.

Step 2

Help _____ choose a book from the box that _____ thinks looks interesting.

Each day choose a new book, or continue with the book from the day before.

Step 3

Go to your table and help _____ to settle down.

Talk about the book and what the story might be about using the title and the pictures to help you.

Step 4

Tell _____ that you are now going to read the story together.

Tell _____ that if _____ feels ready to read the story by _____ self to tap twice on the table.

Show _____ by tapping twice on the desk yourself.

Step 5

Read the story together. Make sure that _____ is reading with you.

When _____ taps on the table, stop.

Tell _____ that you are pleased that he or she wants to read alone.

Tell _____ to read on but that if there is a word that is difficult, or if a mistake is made you will help by reading together again.

You must follow every word with your eyes and ears, and listen carefully for any mistakes.

Step 6

When _____ makes a mistake, or cannot read a word, stop _____ at the end of that sentence.

Tell _____ what the right word or words are and ask _____ to repeat after you the correct word or words.

If _____ makes a mistake, but then quickly corrects it, do not stop.

If _____ corrects a mistake or correctly reads a hard word, or a word you think is new when reading alone, show that you are pleased by saying: 'that's right'

or 'that's it'

or 'good'

or anything that shows that you are pleased.

Do not prompt if _____ does not know the word, but

wait, and after you have counted to 5 in your head, tell _____ the word.

Step 7

When you have told _____ what the right word is carry on reading together.

When _____ again feels ready to read by _____ self, _____ should tap again on the table.

Repeat Steps 6 and 7 until the reading time is finished.

Read for 10 minutes altogether.

Step 8

Talk to _____ about the story you have read.

Ask _____ — 'Did you like it?'
— 'Why?' or 'Why not?'
— 'Which part was best?'
— (If the story was not finished), 'What might happen next?'

Step 9

Put your book away.

Step 10

Tell _____ to return quickly and quietly to the classroom.

Step 11

Fill in your report card at the back of your handbook.

Step 12

Return quietly to your classroom.

Thank you for helping _____ to become a better reader and thank you for helping your teachers.

Report Card

Put a tick in the right boxes after each session

	I enjoyed today's reading session:-				Reading today was:		
Reading Session	a lot	a little	not much	not at all	better	the same	not so good
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							

Tutor's Checklist

Put a tick in the right boxes after each session

When I teach my pupil I have remembered to:	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7	Session 8	Session 9	Session 10	Session 11	Session 12	Session 13	Session 14
1. Be friendly and put my pupil at ease														
2. Talk about the story and pictures														
3. Tell my pupil to knock on the table when he or she wants to read by him/herself														
4. Make sure he/she co-operates. I have listened to my pupil all the time.														
5. Praise my pupil when he/she a) wants to read by her/himself														
b) corrects an error themselves or														
c) works out a hard word														
6. Make sure he/she says the word correctly after you when he/she makes a mistake. Read from the beginning of the sentence again with me.														

Notes

Libby Limbrick is a lecturer and doctoral student in the Education Department of Auckland University, Private Bag, Auckland, New Zealand.

Marie Cameron is a child psychologist with the Department of Education and recipient of the 1983 New Zealand Psychological Association Field and Research Award for study of peer tutoring in an intermediate school.

Dr Stuart McNaughton is Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Auckland.